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AUTHOR Tiller, Tom
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ABSTRACT

Schools need to be reoriented and restructured so that what is taught and learned, and the way in which it is taught and learned, are better integrated with young people's real-world experiences. Many indicators suggest that the meaningful aspects of school have been lost in the encounter with modern times. The title of this address--"Every Other Day"--is a metaphor drawn from the author's school days in northern Norway, where students attended school only on alternate days. The "other" day--the day off from school--was far more important for students' lives after graduation than they then realized. On the off day, children were involved in their families' daily lives, shared activities with adults, learned through observation and experience about their parents' work, and gained extensive knowledge of the local environment and community culture. Today, however, school totally dominates the lives of children. In addition to being a place to learn, school must be a "place to be" and a channeling mechanism for the speculative, commercialized forces in society. These are enormous tasks and they create problems at all levels of the educational system. Schools must find new ways to incorporate the benefits of the "other" day and create opportunities for "learning encounters" between schooling and everyday life. Rather than trying to create a common curriculum for all areas of a diverse country, schools should ground curricula in the local context and the daily experiences of students. (SV)

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS
Every Other Day

Tom Tiller, University of Tromsoe, Norway

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In this talk, I argue that schools need to be reoriented and restructured so that what is taught and learned, and the way in which it is taught and learned, are better integrated with young people's real world experiences. Many indicators strongly suggest that the meaningful aspects of school have been lost in the encounter with modern times. The free spirit that characterizes youth culture conflicts with the ways schools are conceptualized and operated. School has fallen behind the times and behind new developments. It is the school that must change.

"Every other day" is a metaphor taken from my own schooldays in north Norway, where we attended school only on alternate days. The "other" day, that is, the day we were off from school, was far more important for our lives after graduation than we then realized. That day off meant that even our school, which seemed only minimally relevant, was comparatively good. Today, however, school totally dominates the life of our children. This places great demands on the school to provide students with fulfilling life experiences, and it requires new organizational structures. We're approaching an either-or situation: either give back to youth that "other" day, that day off or school will lose its meaning and legitimacy.

When We Lose the "Other" Day

Not long ago I got a phone call from a junior high school teacher and mother of four. She told me that she "lost" her students over the course of the school year, by which she meant that she lost contact with them, and that they lost their engagement with school. She wasn't talking about isolated cases, but about a growing trend, and it was that which had made her very disheartened and discouraged. As she explained, "Me paradox is that I am considered a capable teacher by my students and their parents. What's happening? It can't be school that's doing this. Is it just the times we live in? What do you think? It usually happens a few months into the eighth grade. They just slip between my fingers, and I never get them back."

It is not just this teacher who has noticed that something dramatic is happening in the schools, especially in junior high. New curricula on shiny paper presented with ministerial authority won't solve this problem. The problems of school are so fundamental that reworking old curricula won't make a big enough difference. Besides, curricula are perhaps not as important as we think, especially if we don't even have much faith in them. After all, consider the Danes, who arguably have one of the world's best elementary school systems, which they achieved without a national curriculum to guide them.

School isn't keeping step with the times, we could say. Something completely new is required to keep up with new developments. Schools have searched for inspiration in every nook and cranny from New York to New Zealand. School administrators have heard famous educational practitioners, theorists and researchers at countless conferences and courses, where they have sat day in and day out listening, wondering, and admiring. School has in truth bounced from guru to guru, like a giant kangaroo hopping from one idea to the next (Tiller, 1990). This bouncing has sapped schools of their strength and in the middle of all this, doubts have spread, unnoticed and unarticulated. It's a dangerous kind of doubt, headed towards surrender.

Maybe we have been inundated with too many new ideas from too many inventive souls. Maybe our fickle embrace of all that's new has made our teachers and administrators dejected and alienated. Perhaps there's a subversive nature to all this. We teachers listen, we eat our lunch together, we discuss things a bit, and then we head for home to our complicated everyday lives. Maybe we have forgotten how to dunk for ourselves and trust our own ideas. Maybe there are solutions-solutions we can find in our own schools and our own school boards.

A general problem with schools today seems to be that young people have lost any kind of involvement in real life work experiences. School has closed many of the doors that used to be open to the world of work and culture. There used to be more time to share activities with adults. Not only was the school day shorter, but school was also cancelled when hectic work cycles required it. In Norway we used to have a "potato vacation," which meant time off from school, although it was anything but a holiday. Potato vacation was tantamount to hard labor and aching backs, when the potatoes had to be harvested and stored. It was unquestioned then that children had to help out on the farm or with the fishing when it was needed. Today, however, school robs our children of their time, in particular of the time to participate in work with their parents and other adults. A potato vacation would be unthinkable today. The old patterns of work life have changed dramatically. There is no more room for children in the workplace, many would say. Therefore, schools have to compensate and give young people not just a place to learn but also a place to be.

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Schools can't accomplish all that we ask of them today. The situation is decidedly critical. Maybe we should look back in our own lives to see if there are possibilities and solutions there that we haven't considered. Perhaps we can get some inspiration from the old organizational pattern the one that alternated between the classroom and the life out of earshot of the school bell. Of course we can't recreate the past. Nostalgia will lead us down the wrong track, but inspiration from the past may help us lay new tracks to the future.

In my first years at school, we had classes only every other day. There was just one classroom and one teacher, with lower grades working together and upper grades together. On the "other day" school was out. But when we were "off" from school, we were "on" to something else. The other day was full of duties to be discharged, duties related to making a living, to housekeeping, to farm work, and fishing work. The other day was exciting and at the heart of life. Importantly, its significance also permeated our days back at school.

We tried to forget the other day when we were at school, but it would sneak back into our minds. It was not easy sitting and drawing hippopotami at our desks while watching otters playing at the shore. Concentrating on reflexive pronouns was somehow not as compelling when, only a few hundred meters from the school window, local fishermen waited for a break in the waves to bring their boats up onto the rocky white shores.

On the Path to Educational Tyranny

In those days, our schoolwork paled beside experiences from our other day. Now it's the opposite. School dominates our children's lives, even long after the routine "How was your school day, dear?" is over. School not only consumes the days of the students but also preoccupies the lives of the parents. They edit school reports, they help count the stars, they take joy in school victories and worry about defeats. A quiet but insistent thought arises: should we allow this tyranny of schooling to continue? Should we accept that despite all the good intentions listed in polished curricular handbooks, life experience and contact with Larger society have disappeared from our children's lives?

Have we been so eager to make schools efficient, effective, and accountable that we have forgotten that for children, school is their workplace for thirteen long years? We used to keep schools in their place, back when we had that "other" day, that day off. We accepted the significant role of schools and the importance of subject-matter leaning. Families and the local community, however, took care of many fundamentals: safety, pleasure, duties, and rights-even basic manners, some would say. The mandate of the schools was unambiguous: teach children basic knowledge. Now schools must be three different things: a place to learn, a place to be, and a channeling mechanism for the speculative, commercialized forces in society.

These are enormous tasks and they create problems at all levels of the educational system. Curricula simply repeat old-fashioned values in light, modem versions. Modem curricula are like the slender, sleek bodies we see in advertisements, like the pithy slogans we read on billboards: superficially appealing but lacking substance. Our curricula target a "clean" classroom: we aim for organization, standardization, and coordination. We snub local culture and tam our focus towards Europe and the world, towards economic growth through society's ability to mobilize creativity and knowledge.

At the center of all our curriculum reform efforts are the children. Curricula talk about learning for life. Pupils learn not only for life, but also for their lives. The logic, of instrumentalism takes hold in the role of the student in the young person. No one articulates it clearly but the message is nonetheless ambiguous: if you want to be somebody in this world, you can't just learn a lot. You also have to win a lot. Do your best and win, says the curriculum. "Win and beat the others" is the tacit message. Is it true that capable teachers are "losing" their students, as was asserted by the teacher I mentioned at the beginning? Are schools wearing their students out? Will "The Great Curricular Reform" have an unexpected, undesired side effect in the form of talent loss instead of maximal utilization of the collective talents of our young people? In the United States we see a growing tendency for parents to take their children out of school for home schooling.. Today about two million children are home-schooled in the U.S. (Dagbladet, 4-1-96). Some educational researchers in my country predict that current school reforms in Norway will lead more parents to consider home schooling there. The tendencies are clear. Dissatisfaction with public schooling is sharply rising. Christian Beek asserts that that compulsory schooling for 6-year-olds will result in increased school fatigue rather than better learning (Beek, 1996). Should we care about this critique or just keep quiet? Should we start today to try to create dynamic new alternatives?

The Learning Encounter: Bringing life to school and school to life

In trying to understand what the "other" day contributed to learning and development, it is important to remember the basic requirements of good schooling. A fundamental condition for meaningful and enduring learning to take place at school is that the life experiences of young people are integrated with what is taught and learned in the classroom. This is what I call the "learning encounter" (Tiller, 1999), and it's a prerequisite for reflective teaching and the ongoing evolution of schools as organic

institutions. Good schooling always takes into consideration the experiences children bring with them to the classroom. A good teacher must know two things very well: the subject and the students. Today people seem to be focused disproportionately on subject matter. Children's thoughts, feelings, and opinions about life events aren't necessarily correct but nonetheless, they are a vital part of an organized learning process. If the learning encounter is neglected, then we can train students but we close the door on true, enduring learning. Training is something children forget very quickly. Training and instrumentalism are close relatives. Good schools of the future can not have training as their fundamental principle. True learning requires that students actively take responsibility for their own and others' development. When students do that, they bring themselves and their experiences to their encounter with organized knowledge. This kind of learning encounter is fundamental for learning at any age. We can see it when it happens--it's the spark in a six-year old's face when the match between life and knowledge is right. We can see in high school when it happens, and we recognize the glow in college students when their life experiences mesh with subject matter. The learning encounter literally and figuratively brings knowledge to life.

Establishing and developing learning encounters is a demanding undertaking. It requires that teachers see students as people, and that they care about what they see. It's about a great deal more than simple technique. It requires that teachers make immediate connections between the subject matter and the students' reactions and attitudes that find expression in the classroom. The ephemeral moment has to be plugged into the long-term. Unexpected pauses must sometimes be taken and unplanned breaks in the learning process must be allowed. Teaching cannot be steered like a jet: it must be allowed to move more like a butterfly fluttering through the air. Or in musical terms, good teachers can't just plod through the standard repertoire; they must be able to improvise. The mission of the school is to build knowledge up from where the student starts. Learning takes courage, and it's the teacher's job to give the students challenges, motivation, and the strengths to learn. Developing learning encounters requires confidence in children's ability to take responsibility for their own learning. It also requires a certain amount of freedom.

The encounter between school knowledge and everyday experience is decisive not just for student attitudes toward school, but also for how children view themselves as people. When students don't understand what schools wants them to understand, it influences their self-concept. When a student doesn't "get" physics, the student also learns that "I am no good" relative to the expectations of the school. When children experience this over and over again, in subject after subject they rapidly develop a negative self-image. It's dangerous not only in the short-term but also in the long-term for the future of a democratic society. If the school day is void of moments that create identity and meaning, the benefits of schooling won't last long. Students who fail in one or more subjects will naturally enough try to avoid these subjects in the future to protect themselves from threatening encounters with knowledge. We all avoid situations where we feel unsuccessful. In this manner we prevent the positive parts of our self-image, laboriously built up over our lifetime, from crumbling. Thus, discouraging experiences in the early years at school make us avoid the spotlight and withdraw from the lifelong learning process.

Perhaps negative school experiences help explain why so few parents become engaged in school activities. It is difficult for some parents to re-encounter the classroom after so many negative moments there, and it's even more painful to realize as an adult that one's distance from the smart kids at school has grown greater over the years; the disparity has been magnified. Thus, negative learning experiences can not only explain student weariness with school, but also help elucidate motivational problems in adult education. It doesn't t take much for discouraged learners to be wary of theory, theorists, and, unfortunately, teachers. Thus, a good school today also creates good, involved parents and motivated adult learners tomorrow. Teachers shouldn't ignore this fact, even if it requires that they look rather far into the future.

The Neglected Perspective

An article in the north-Norwegian newspaper Nordlys. (7-12-95) stated that in Havoysund, a village in Finnmark, children typically lose a week or two of school each year so that they can help with the fishing or with baiting fishing lines. In Havoysund they've made room for what is called "local subject matter" in the curriculum. The "other" day is conceptualized as a subject on a par with all the other school subjects. It's one way to compensate for the loss of the other day and the consequent loss of direct contact with nature and local culture. Havoysund has the right perspective. It isn't about tying young people to a particular place. It is however, about giving them a good grounding from where they can securely choose what they want to do and where they want to live in the future. It's about preventing school from unconsciously and unintentionally pushing children out of rural areas. It's about establishing roots, and it's about setting one's sights on creative, new possibilities and positive scenarios. This view towards the future can find a place in all classrooms and even in the school kitchen, where students in Havoysund could for example, prepare a delicious French or Italian fish supper for parents and local politicians. The exotic meal would be part of the systematic subject-related knowledge of the curriculum and would also represent an effort to learn about finding new niches for improving the

processing of raw materials, and for continuing life along the shore. It is a different perspective than cramming about Spanish food customs just because it's the next chapter in the geography textbook.

Large-scale development projects in the 1970s (e.g. The Lofoten Project) placed school-community relations on the agenda. The current work in Havoysund recalls how schools rose to the local challenge twenty years ago. Back then there were the same arguments and reasons and some of the same spirit. Discussions about curricula in many countries have echoed the same approach to the problem. (See, for example, McSwan, 1994; and Sher, 1995.) At the most basic level, our gut feeling says that a good school has something to do with that golden encounter between children's experiences and the codified knowledge and attitudes of the school. This is equally true and important at lower grades as at higher grades. At higher grades the life/school. connection win be different but just as central in the learning context.

Local orientation of a curriculum is not synonymous with local obsession. When schools include community activities and work life as a "local subject" or a cultural project its strengthens a child's identity. It is about recognizing oneself at school, as well as being recognized and acknowledged. It's about linking schooling and living. It's about taking root so that you can grow tall and strong and weather life's storms.

The Same Opportunities for All

A new bit of Norwegian school jargon is the expression "common frames of reference," that is, the core content making up some kind of pan-Norwegian experience. The thinking behind this idea is that children should not be forced to deal with a new curriculum if they move to another part of the country. In and of itself, this idea makes sense. But where should these common frames of reference come from? Whose perspective should guide the choice of these frames of reference? Considering the history of Norwegian schools, there is good reason to fear that fishing nets from Havoysund or other rural areas won't be at the top of the list of elements to include in these frames of reference. Back in my school days, I remember a phonics exercise where we had to find a rhyming word for "nok". The book provided "flokk" as a correct example. This made me and the other students in my class scratch our heads in bewilderment, because in our dialect, "nok" rhymed with "flaak," not "flokk." That was long ago, some people say. But if you doubt that this attitude is still alive and well in modern Norway, watch the televised national finals of the student quiz show. Are there just as many questions about plants and animals from remote Havoysund as there are from Ski or Baerum in the south? The decisive question for one of the elimination rounds not too long ago concerned the common blue jay, a bird from southern Norway.

People still talk about schools providing equal opportunities to all. We cannot create equal opportunities in a geographically and culturally diverse country like Norway if we are teaching the same material everywhere. Paradoxically, it is in the differences that we have the greatest potential for equality. Children and adults learn best when examples are drawn from the familiar and known. As a pupil, I made the acquaintance of A, B, C and D who all worked at a factory, a place that most definitely was not part of my known and familiar world. Poor "D" was frequently sick and often had to go home in the middle of the workweek. I often felt sorry for D, even if he was only a letter who worked in a factory. On one of our tests, we had to figure out hours and wages for all of them, which made that test day a kind of "D-day" for me. Another puzzling situation for me was the trolley car that left at 11:43 and reached its destination at 12:08. 1 didn't believe a thing about this story, even though the teacher claimed it was true. I believed in busses that now and again arrived at the ferry landing and then went no further But nonetheless we had to figure out trolley schedules in Oslo. The problem was that none of us had any experience with factories and trolley cars. The "common frames of reference" that prevailed at that time did not in any way give us all the same chance to succeed first at school and then in a competitive society. If schools slide back into such a system, then some students will slip right over the edge, and pretty words in curriculum plans won't help.

Grounding the curricula in the local context is important no matter what the context. The basic curricular structure can be the same, but the examples should vary according to geography and culture. In some locales, trolley schedules can be actual examples in math problems, but bus or ferry schedules will prove more relevant and engaging elsewhere. Schooling that is based on common frames of references and standardized content will limit the chance for true learning encounters to occur. If the near and known context is utilized only as a means to understand a single "correct" common frame of reference, then we risk alienating young people from their experiences. If the common material includes only token familiar bits, this lack of relevance must be compensated for in some other way, maybe in the form of new methodologies. But methods can never compensate for the absence of known and near frames of reference. Unfortunateiy, Norwegian schools have a long history of alienating rural students by imposing a centralized view of knowledge and then gratuitously sprinkling in bits of local knowledge like exotic spice. The challenge for teachers is to adapt the standardized materials. The further the standardized materials are from the students' local world, the more adaptation will be necessary. This creates not only inequality for student teaming, but also unequal

working conditions for teachers and administrators. The pedagogical challenge grows proportionately with the distance from the core content.

It is admittedly possible that a new standardized curriculum could be constructed with greater wisdom than was exhibited in the past from those who tried to foster enthusiasm for mathematics with the help of A, B, C, and D, who worked at the factory in the city. It is certainly possible to teach textbook writers and train textbook consultants to assess "common" content with a more critical eye. Teachers, too, can choose to give more coverage to crows where textbooks have showcased southern songbirds. Even if some things can be done more wisely and misguided interpretations of equality can be checked, it is, nonetheless, the same old concept simply dusted off To further aggravate things, education today is characterized by challenges that make polishing up the old concept of common content even less advantageous. For example, days and years at school are longer. Motivation drops as students move up in grade level. Many important societal features have changed. Far stronger words than "weariness with school" have been bandied about in debates. The "tyranny of education" is one such term. The school now has strong competitors in modem media and information technology. More and more students hurry home at the end of the school day to "finally have a chance to learn something," as a boy once said to me two hours before the end of the school day. There was no shame or embarrassment in his words or facial expression, either. Society's and school's burdensome demands on young people make it hard on everyone. It's important to ask if this newest phase of thinking about content feeds the tyranny of education and if we can see a growing disparity between the so-called central and peripheral areas of the country.

The Other Day or the Day After?

In the discussion about good teaching and teaming, misunderstandings and misrepresentations arise easily. Reinstating the "other" day in school doesn't mean that the teaching of theory and concepts must be abandoned. Paradoxically enough, a greater theoretical understanding is necessary to make sense of how things in a complex world are connected. But if by theory me means that school should more strongly emphasize detached abstractions, then we're on the wrong track. All citizens, not just teachers and administrators, have a responsibility to insure that school development doesn't head down the wrong track in years ahead. Elementary school should lay the foundation for students to have positive attitudes towards theoretical knowledge and new teaming.

Understanding something is not the same as the ability to repeat or parrot. Students who get the answers right on tests do not necessarily have a greater grasp of the subject area. Supplying the correct answer is not the same as understanding something theoretically. In-depth understanding demands that the teaming encounter occur in the teaming process, that is, that students can recognize their own experiences and thoughts in theoretical reasoning. Students must learn to master abstract language and thinking, but they can do this only by starting with their experiences. This is an important foundation for lifelong learning. Doubtless, there are problems of motivation and legitimacy in schools today, bit we should be wary of assuming that the lack of discipline and the weariness with school seen in today's youth are evidence of individual psychological problems. It's not simply a case that "these kids need a good talking to." A more fruitful approach to understanding the problems of school is to ask if young people really see and understand what teaching and learning is for. Do they see a connection between school and life? Thirteen years of compulsory education means that there's a long wait to see if what they learn is of any use. In addition, large segments of society have become distanced despite the increased flow of information. When we look carefully enough, we can see growing class distinctions between those who utilize information by transforming it into in-depth knowledge and those who only sit and glance at the days news. Even if they listen, they don't understand what the issues really concern. I didn't understand the issues about A, B, C, and D in their factories, and growing numbers of people don't understand the issues facing the As, Bs, Cs, and Ds they see on the nightly news. There always seems to be a new D being talked about who gets rained on and who we feel a bit sorry for. Then we switch to another channel. It used to be that we could look forward to the "other" day. The existence and promise of the other day meant that we managed to sit through our day at school and even calculate enthusiastically what D's wages were at the factory, or marvel when we learned that down south they said "naakk" and therefore it rhymed with "flokk." We took in as much of the common frames of reference as we could. The other day insured that we would have the important fundamentals of learning: safety, play, excitement, creativity, and freedom. What now? Are we heading towards a situation where the school day conquers the other day? Have we missed the boat and now must suffer through the day after?

Towards a new alternate day

What are we to do? We cannot of course let students have every other day off as in my childhood. We have to find a new way to incorporate the benefits of the other day into modem schools. Nonetheless, we can look at the characteristics of the old other day to help us construct a new other day. Our other day experiences outside of school didn't have a name and weren't really remarked upon except to note if we had behaved well or poorly. Either we went to school or we had the day off it was

school which "counted." We endlessly heard grown-ups intone: "If you don't do your homework, you'll amount to nothing. You'll never get a decent job if you're not smart at school. Do your homework and listen to your teacher and you'll make a success of yourself."

In reality, however, there was so very much more on the other day. We weren't just out of school, we were immersed in life. The day off gave us rich experiences. That day insured that holistic learning occurred in our lives. We were involved in many informal apprentice-master relationships. We young people were invited into important, legitimate learning positions, even if we were often on the periphery of the activity. The other day was characterized by what we now call situation-based learning. We cooperated as we worked side by side with the adults. There was always some kind of real-world problem that had to be solved, that needed to be reasoned out and discussed together. The other day provided clear space for creativity and excitement. We gained responsibility for increasingly difficult assignments and we were trusted to complete them. Grown-ups had patience with our young hands that didn't always have the right grasp for milking a cow or cleaning a fish. We were trained to be humble and have respect for adults. Through common work it wasn't difficult to show adults respect and place ourselves somewhat to the side where observation and contemplation slowly but surely mixed with tying and failing at first, but later, tying and mastering.

We were indeed free from a school schedule but we were in no way free to do what we wanted. There was always work that had to be done. Every season had its own work. In the winter we had the most free time, except for the usual chores in the barn. The animals had to be fed and the barn cleaned out. We also had to talk with them. I was convinced for many years that the long dialogues I held with my cow were why she always had so much milk. It was undeniably true that the cows didn't kick the milk bucket if we patted and brushed them while we milked. Often there was more chat and patting than milk in the bucket, especially when I tried out new ideas such as the time I decided that the cat and our prize cow should sleep in the same stall, with the cat on the cow's back.

But not all was sunshine and roses on the day off On many mornings I dreaded getting up, especially when the wind howled outside and I knew that we had to go out to sea to pull in the nets so that the catch wouldn't be destroyed. Many times I was afraid out at sea. I knew that my father wouldn't take any unreasonable chances, but I also knew that much was at stake if we didn't go out and that he might play with the limits. But he was very careful when I was with him, so it was largely out of concern for my parents that I insisted that I should go along and asserted that I wasn't the least bit aft-aid. I especially dreaded getting the boat out into the water, because there was no pier or dock, and we had to force our way into the waves. One time something went wrong and the boat crashed back onto the rocks again. The winter was cold and just the thought of it brings back that feeling of the bitter, piercing cold on my cheeks. But that wasn't the worst. The worst was that I had to use big rubber gloves, while the adults had thick felted wool mittens. Using rubber gloves hurt my young dignity, especially when we went ashore and others saw me wearing them. You had the right to mutter strong, many words while wringing the water out of the mittens. Without wool mittens you couldn't really talk tough like that. Once I borrowed some dry woolen mitts, and went down to the shore when no one saw, dipped them in the water, and wrung them out while I practiced some grown-up talk. It was frightfully cold and at that exact moment I was grateful for my waterproof rubber gloves. The other day was not always a carefree dance in the roses, even though of course the carefree days are the most easily recalled.

Judged by today's demands for meaningful content, my school days were pretty hopeless. There was little in school that had anything to do with the world of my buddies and me. Textbooks contained very little that was familiar to me, and not much about north Norway altogether. Facts about Oslo and its environs, about cities and towns abounded. Almost all the brilliant color pictures in the textbooks came from urban, modem industrial areas. The grainy black and white photos captured life in rural, isolated areas. I deduced that the material about north Norwegian conditions just didn't merit much interest. As a child I couldn't articulate this feeling-it was more a gut feeling, not yet put into words. It was as if something didn't quite make sense, didn't quite fit. Life in North Norway was flat and insignificant. Knowledge about "my world" wasn't exciting. Deep inside a little voice told us where it was worthwhile to live in the future, something about what held the greatest values in life and about where you had to move to become someone who counted. Without a doubt the old textbooks whispered, "Move away." To make matters even worse, what little there was about north Norway was often wrong.

Despite the lack of anything familiar in our schoolbooks, when we worked hard, there was a connection with the other day, and life after school. The other day, which could be demanding and exhausting, meant that our day in school sometimes felt like a day off. School became the legitimate free zone from the cold winds on the sea and the frosty air of the barn. At those times it was preferable that the school material was created from completely different experiences and thoughts than those I had on my little north Norwegian island. Of course were also socialized to obey and respect adults on the other day, and we carried these same attitudes into the classroom. We wrote little ditties about school and complained liberally about the

injustices of school, but we enjoyed ourselves most of the time.

I almost always looked forward to going to school, even if I didn't always love school itself. My walk to school, a kilometer along a deserted beach, was always a pleasure. On the day after a storm the walk was especially thrilling. There was always something exciting which had washed up on shore. Anything red, green, or gold made me quiver with excitement-this was, of course, before the era of colorful plastic garbage. Storms brought the natural world even nearer-sometimes large fish were washed up on shore by the wind and waves. My motivation to go to school was certainly enhanced by having a shoreline as my school route. I have since understood that one's route to school is perhaps a more important influence than we realize for motivation to attend school. If you dread the getting to school, it naturally colors the whole school experience negatively. When new schools are being planned, thorough consideration should be given to how the children will get to school, and thought should be given to more than just whether it will be free of traffic hazards and bullies.

Now the walk to school isn't so exciting, and the other day has all but disappeared. Schools today, seen in isolation, are much better than my old school, even if students aren't t as happy. Today children set schools on fire. Reports about burned down schools appear all too often. Schools bum, both literally and figuratively. Too many students are unhappy at school. Too many are bullied. Too many learn too little. And even then, school is better now than it used to be. Students learn more relevant things, and learn it in more varied ways. Teachers are better and administrators are much better than before.

Can the problems with schools be traced to the loss of the other day, with its freedom, play, experiences, creativity, and daily demands for participation and proper behavior? Is it at all possible for school in its existing form to find once again the balance between life and school? Can school compensate for the disappearance of the other day? Or must we work in new ways and build new paths to school? I think so. I dunk we must now show daring and try out new concepts.

There are possibilities. We can start out small and invite adults into schools so that they can see that the other day is gone. We could make it a requirement for all school politicians at every governmental level to go to a school at least two days a year-not to inspect them, but to learn and be inspired. It should be proposed as more than a wish that all parents participate actively in a school activity once a year. In such a way they will understand teachers' frustrations and dilemmas, and they will value the very important work which is carried out in schools. There's a new mandate for everyone: try to find the other day. If it's not there, the next step is to ask how schools and families and communities can recreate this day in modem times. Creative and realistic suggestions will emerge: students must be allowed to participate more actively in the dynamic world of work. Junior high students could have at least one day a week out in the work world, with guidance and encouragement from adults, with a little remuneration, and with the opportunity to use their enormous creativity.

But such "other" days must not be viewed as an add-on or as compensatory, so that it's a day for losers and under achievers. If that were the case, the other day would become yet another way to increase the growing class divisions in Nordic countries. The other day can give inspiration and light to the building of a new path to schooling in the modem world. We must dare to take the challenge, otherwise teachers will continue to watch students slip out of their hands. We must dare to think in new ways and try new things. We won't grow if we don't demonstrate the will to change.

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